

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
BUREAU OF RAIL AND TRANSIT**

CONFERENCE REPORT

DATE OF MEETING: January 15, 2014

LOCATION OF MEETING: NHDOT, 5 Hazen Drive, Concord NH Room 205

SUBJECT: Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Committee (BPTAC)

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Nik Coates, At-Large Citizen Representative, BPTAC Chair
Mark Samsel, NH Rail Trails Coalition, BPTAC Vice Chair
Eric Feldbaum, Department of Resource and Economic Development
Erik Paddleford, NHDOT Rail and Transit
Felice Janelle, NHDES
Tim Blagden, Bike-Walk Alliance of NH
Regina Flynn, Department of Health and Human Services
Dave Topham, Granite State Wheelmen
Craig Tufts, Central NH Planning Commission
Rick Taintor, Portsmouth Planning Department (by phone)
Scott Bogle, Rockingham Planning Commission

GUESTS PRESENT:

Larry Keniston, NHDOT Rail and Transit
Jim Kirouac, NHDOT Highway Design
Matt Waitkins, NRPC
Adam Hlasny, SNHRPC
Chuck Redfern, Pathways for Keene, Keene Bike/ Ped Committee
Will Schoefmann, City of Keene
Steve Waleryszak, SWRPC
Tim Murphy, SWRPC
Tom Chapman, Citizen At Large
Nate Miller, UVLSRPC
Glenn Robie, Big R Bridge
Daniel Snyder, SNHPC

NOTES ON MEETING:

The regular meeting of the BPTAC was called to order January 15, at 1 p.m. by the Chair.

Approval of November Minutes

The minutes of the November 20, 2013 meeting were approved.

Projects

Each of the subcommittees provided an update on work completed to date.

Mapping Project

Steve Waleryszak gave an update on the mapping project. The mapping subcommittee envisions using RPC staff to create revised bicycle route maps that build upon the current maps available from NHDOT and the regional planning commissions. To create a regional dataset, each RPC would complete a dataset for their region utilizing GIS to develop a regional geospatial dataset showing bicycle and pedestrian routes categorized by level of difficulty.

SWRPC would be responsible for project management and administration and would combine the statewide dataset and publish the data as an online interactive web map that could then be placed on municipal, state agency, local bicycle groups, chambers of commerce and RPC sites.

Subcommittee members are also interested in purchasing a statewide dataset from the Hanover NH based company called Strava. Strava is a company that has a website and mobile app used to track athletic activity via GPS. The most popular activities Strava tracks are cycling and running/hiking. The data contains attributes such as location, length, duration, elevation, and speed and could be matched up with the NHDOT roads layer. The data for 2013 contains 175,000 rides, based on 10K users. Cost for the data is estimated at \$10,000.

Subcommittee members participated in a webinar by Strava to provide an overview of the data. The Strava dataset could be used for safety analysis, bike/ ped counts, infrastructure improvement planning, and also determining possible tourism visits since the data has information on the users origin. The ability to measure users coming in and out of NH could show potential tourism hot spots by showing where out of state users are bicycling. The data would provide real information about where bicycle tourism is happening in NH. Running data could also be obtained and this information could help determine how much use recreational paths receive and could show “shortcuts” away from roads where paths could be installed.

Strava representatives on the webinar indicated that experienced and novice cyclists make roughly the same route choices, with only a 2% difference between the two cyclist types. All cyclists will take the safest route whether experienced or not.

If the data is purchased, it will be tested by RPCs who will work with local communities to ensure accuracy of the data. Each RPC would determine priority routes in their regions.

Oregon Department of Transportation has bought data from Strava recently; Tim Blagden has been in contact with ODOT.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Counting

Matt Waitkins gave an update on the counting program. Members of the counting committee are currently discussing protocols for conducting bicycle and pedestrian counts around the state and researching automatic counting machines. The group is working on a letter containing a set of instructions/ procedures for conducting bicycle and pedestrian counts that could be sent to municipalities who is interested in conducting counts. CNHRPC and SWRPC have conducted counts before and have forms that could be used statewide. Counts are conducted to coincide with the National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project counting dates.

Committee members have spoken with representatives at Alto Planning and Design, who have performed extensive bicycle and pedestrian counting for urban areas and indicated that the majority of counts are still conducted by hand.

Committee members have a goal of having protocols in place for this counting season and would like to demo equipment and come up with a summary of findings in order to help make a decision as to what equipment should be purchased.

The fiscal agent for the project is currently Central NH planning.

The group discussed the use of the Strava data to get more detailed analysis of bicycle and pedestrian counts along with potentially acquiring yearly updates that could show year to year changes in route data especially if infrastructure changes are made (lane reallocation, widening, shoulders, repaving, installing bike lanes/ rail trails, etc...). The Strava data could be used to identify areas where physical counts could be taken, and the physical counts could also serve as a double check to the Strava data.

Design and Maintenance Issues Guidance

There are five active committee members. The group has had 2 meetings and has determined that the goal of the committee is to provide municipalities guidance on how to be more bike and pedestrian friendly and on how to get involved in DOT project development projects such as paving and re-striping of subcommittee.

The group wants to work on designing a guide that could be sent to stakeholders, community members, and municipalities that would provide information on how to become involved in the project development process, what to look for on how to review bicycle and pedestrian facility and design projects, and how to provide input to decision makers. The group will work on developing guide content.

Work on these design guidelines will likely overlap with the work on the Bike / Ped Plan, so the two groups will discuss how the groups can work together.

Project inventory

Tim Blagden gave an overview of the project inventory. The group has compiled a list of bicycle and pedestrian projects using the projects listed in the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ), Transportation Enhancement (TE), and Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs, by contacting local bicycle groups and the listing of projects requesting funding from the NH Bicycle and Pedestrian Grant Program. The purpose of the inventory is to identify unmet need and determine where bike and ped infrastructure would likely have the greatest benefit to the state.

The committee researched the concept of “stress mapping” by reviewing report 11-19 by Mineta Transportation Institute called “Low-Stress Bicycling and Network Connectivity” that looked at bicyclist stress levels in the San Jose area. Stress mapping could be used in conjunction with the project inventory to identify areas in need of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure within the state. Stress level could be determined by road attributes already contained in database files. It was mentioned that the database road data may not be all that reliable and would need to be checked through local public outreach activities.

The Strava data, if purchased, could also be used to compare where cyclists are riding to the bicycling stress levels. The lowest stress roads would likely have the greatest number of bicyclists.

Bicycle level of service (BLOS) and pedestrian level of service (PLOS) studies have been conducted by some RPCs. The project inventory committee feels stress mapping would be more useful than either of these other service measures, but further research into the best approach is still needed.

Signage

Nate Miller gave an overview of the NHPASS signage that has been installed in the Upper Valley region as a “pilot project”. A conference call with Bill Lambert of the Bureau of Traffic to determine if additional NHPASS signs can be installed will take place tomorrow. The purchase of the NHPASS signs with SPR funds is not allowed since they are not MUTCD signs and are considered a public service announcement. UVLSRPC is willing to be the fiscal agent once the work plan is figured out.

NH may be the only state with a graduated passing distance requirement for motorist passing bicyclists. NHDOT is on board with the message of the NHPASS sign, but the subcommittee needs further interpretation of the Commissioners letter approving installation of signs around the state. More will be known after conference the call. The group may consider a letter to the commissioner requesting expansion of the NHPASS signage program.

A question was asked if variable message board (VMB) signs could be used to get a bicycle related message out to motorists. VMBs are booked far in advance and extensively by department of safety. Would need to reserve the VMBs reasonably far in advance if that is a route the committee would like to go.

It was noted that a person takes a drivers test once when they get their drivers test and isn't tested again, so motorists may not even be aware of new laws going into effect since they have been tested. The NHPASS signs and/or VMB signs can get messages out about laws motorists are likely not even aware of.

Bike/ Ped Plan

The group has met twice and has worked on an outline that will become the scope of work for a consultant contract. Committee members have researched plans from other states and Canada as well as reviewed some policy documents from the Center for Disease Control, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the NH Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

Committee members would like to include elements absent from the current bike and ped plan from 2000 including more performance measures that could be built into the NHDOT balance scorecard.

Want to use a 5 E approach with the plan: Engineering, Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, and Evaluation

The committee discussed how the public outreach component would be important in order to get justification for developing policies and performance measures. Preliminary thoughts are to have 2 meetings in each RPC or tourism region. Public input will be challenging given the limited budget. Public involvement should include not just bike advocates but also include groups such as public health agencies, senior groups, education, transportation, and work force development.

Pedestrians and bicyclists should be given equal attention in the plan. Oregon looks to have the best pedestrian plan. The Lakes Region has just finished their bike ped plan; Nashua is working on their plan now, so these plans can be looked to for guidance.

Need to engage upper level DOT staff (Shelley Winters, Patrick Herlihy, Bill Watson, etc..) and go over preliminary ideas for the plan.

Outreach and Marketing

The committee would like to create a website and brochure. Bike-Walk Alliance of NH could potentially be a place to host web related material. Fiscal agent will be SNHRPC. No timeline set up yet. Rotation of participants on phone calls making it difficult to get consensus on how to move forward.

The committee would like to discuss with DRED, to see what they do currently and see how they can help. Need to define a story and market the story. Overlaps with other groups, the story could be what other groups are working on. Want to develop both tourism and economic development components as they relate to marketing.

Biennial work session

The Navigating Map-21 workshop put on by Advocacy Advance will be held in March at DHHS.

The work session could be an extended version of BPTAC meeting to go over all the things that are going on. Old DOT workshops took place in the early 2000's had good agendas and content but were not adequately publicized. In 2004 there was a bike summit that LGC helped with.

The committee will come up with a to-do list and send out to the BPTAC.

Next Meeting: February 19, 1-3 pm, at DOT